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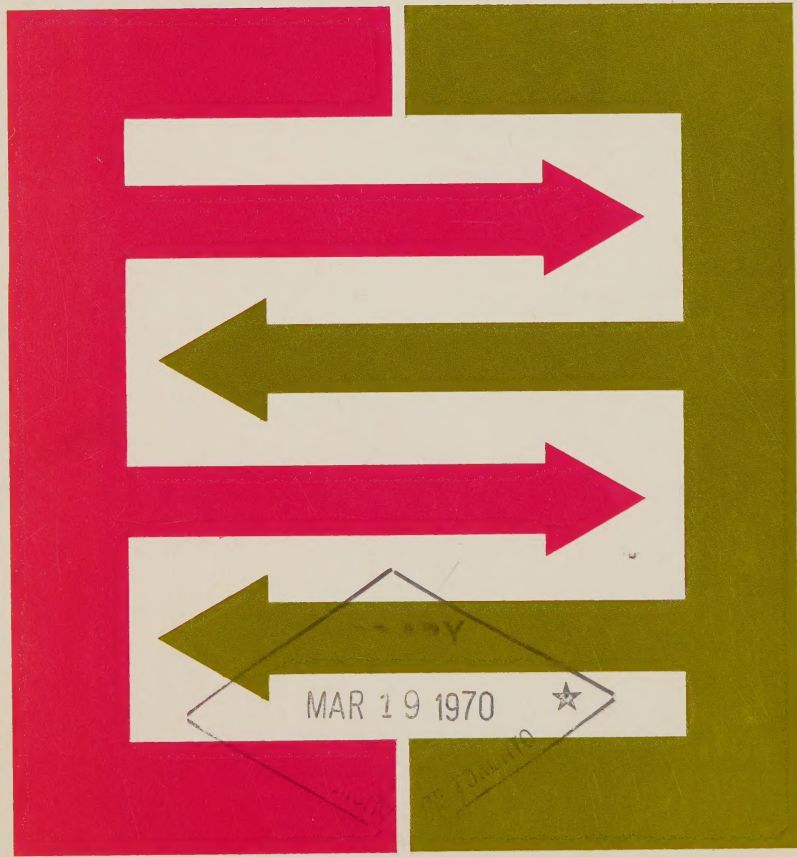



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# HANDBOOK

for LABOUR-MANAGEMENT  
CONSULTATION COMMITTEES





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# HANDBOOK

for Labour-Management  
Consultation Committees

A brief explanation of the role and purposes of labour-management joint consultation committees, and of the roles and responsibilities of committee members.

LABOUR-MANAGEMENT CONSULTATION BRANCH  
CANADA DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR, OTTAWA

*...to meet rapid changes in industrial technology, to meet growing competition in domestic and world markets, to meet the increasing demand for trained and skilled people—these are the challenges that the modern business and industrial world faces. They are challenges best met by the union-management approach of joint consultation committees . . .*

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# LMC COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

## Preamble

A labour-management consultation committee is a system for communication—a means to bring together labour and management in a spirit of co-operation so that they can work out mutual problems. Mutual problems, because any matter that affects one side of the work world also affects the other.

While the LMCC is of direct benefit to the company or plant where it operates, as well as to the employees, it is of indirect benefit to a third party—the general public. As an example, consider the matter of industrial accidents: Each year in the federal domain there are more than 100,000 employment accidents and 150 fatalities, which, in addition to the incalculable human suffering involved, incur compensation costs of tens of millions of dollars. And four times greater than that is the indirect cost of equipment damage, interruption of operations, etc. Accident prevention is only one area to which a labour-management consultation committee can profitably turn its attention.

As this booklet goes to print there are more than 2,500 LMC committees operating in establishments from coast to coast, and through these committees, more than 750,000 members of the labour force influence the pattern and shape of their working world.

This booklet is for those who are considering setting up their own committees—a how-to-do-it manual, in effect.

There is one vital element that must be added to every undertaking if the committee is to be a success: co-operation. It is the grease that keeps the whole thing running, not always smoothly, perhaps, but at least in working order. Co-operation is more than

a state of mind, it can become a working environment, something that is built according to a tested and successful pattern.

First of all, co-operation is built on an exchange of information and knowledge, and the exchange works best when people meet face to face, armed with as many facts as possible, and with the will to listen to, and learn from, each other.

Each group must clearly understand its area of responsibility: management has the responsibility of making every effort to accommodate the socio-economic aspirations of their employees. Union representatives have the responsibility of accommodating management requirements for an efficient operation.

Combine these two responsibilities, and the inter-dependence of labour and management becomes self-evident.

The broad goals and aspirations of any LMC committee are, then, to improve the whole working environment through an exchange of ideas and information—and the starting point is an examination of the goals and wishes of each section of the organization.

Each person must come to the committee table confident that he may speak his mind without fear of reprisal; he has the right to expect immunity.

### **The Role of the LMC Committee**

An information gap is a hole that needs filling. An LMC committee is for closing the gap and filling the holes. Businesses of any size and shape profit from the work of the committee and any may form one, providing it has a certified collective bargaining agent. In fact, the LMC Committee is the logical extension of the union-management structure.

#### *The role of LMC in world affairs*

The knowledge explosion of the past two decades has plummeted the world into an era of rapid technological change. If you were to put all of man's great technical discoveries on film slides, with each slide representing a particular period of time, you would start your slide show leisurely. Toward the end of the show as

you reached mid-20th century, images would flash by at such a rate that little would be distinguishable. In order to keep up with the terrific velocity of change in this new world, we too have to change and absorb the new ways.

On the face of it, an LMC committee seems a puny instrument for meeting this new world. But effective knowledge and information exchanges at LMC meetings lead to efficient problem-solving. Efficient problem-solving in the committee room creates more efficiency in the over-all operation. Multiply one highly productive plant enough times and you have a nation that can compete in world markets, return a higher per capita income to its citizens and provide an acceptable and progressive work world.

If you think the role of the LMC committee is exaggerated, just remember that every long journey begins with one small step.

### *Prerequisites for a committee*

- Both labour and management must recognize that co-operation is essential. *They must share a desire to co-operate.*
- The employees must be covered by a collective bargaining agreement.
- Labour and management must agree on the functions and authority of the committee.
- Management selects its own representatives.
- The union appoints or elects its own representatives.
- The chairman (and co-chairman) are appointed by mutual agreement of both parties.
- Publicity programs should be planned and put into effect, explaining what LMC is and what it can do when everyone participates.
- Meetings must be held regularly.
- Immunity must be assured.
- All activities of the committee should be jointly undertaken.

### *The publicity program*

The time to begin publicizing the committee is before it begins operation.

Keep employees informed on early developments through the company magazine or paper, if there is one; by bulletin board postings; by blanket coverage with information bulletins.

Once the committee has been formally instituted, make sure minutes of the meetings are distributed as widely as possible.

After the committee has been in operation for a time, there should be a publicity program review, which should become a semi-annual requirement.

### *How to set up a committee*

The industrial relations officers at branch offices of the Canada Department of Labour stand ready to advise you at all stages leading up to and including the establishment of the committee. Later, they can advise you on ways to make the committee function more efficiently.

The first steps in establishing a committee are to set forth its objectives; define the role that labour and management must play in order to reach those objectives; and decide on the size of the committee and develop the constitution.

Although constitutions are tailored to the specific needs of the particular organization, and normally define size, equitable representation and structure of the committee, there are certain points basic to all. The *preamble* defines the goals of the committee. Then, the *purpose and function* of the committee is detailed; the *name* of the committee; committee members' term of office; *frequency of meetings*, *duties of committee officers*—all these subjects should be written into the constitution.

Provision for *subcommittees* and *amendments* to the constitution must be dealt with.

The purpose of the constitution is to establish the ground rules: the challenge in the development of the constitution is to make the rules flexible enough so that the committee can respond to change.

The constitution is drafted and approved, and the members of the committee have been appointed or elected—the next step is the preparation of the agenda. That is the usual order of procedure.

### *Talking points*

Committees may discuss any matter mutually agreed upon. Here are some discussion points:

- Elimination of rumours: Have you heard any *good* rumours lately? Can management see any future problem areas which might breed morale-destroying rumours?
- Educational opportunities: How much do the employees know about existing education and retraining opportunities? Are education programs extensive enough to fill the future needs of the operations and to meet labour's goals?
- Company policies which could become grievances: What recent changes have created friction? What does labour feel about the effects of these changes? What are management's reasons for considering changes?
- Safety: What is your safety record? Could changes be made to improve the safety record?

### *From talking points to problem-solving*

Once it is recognized that a problem exists, define it, break it down into its component parts.

See what action can be taken by listing all possible solutions, select what seems to be the best solution and follow through, putting it to the test. Keep a record of the methods used to attack problems and evaluate the successes and failures. This will help you when it comes time to take a critical look at the committee.

### *Committee assessment*

Is the committee working as well as it might? Here is a general check-list that will help you evaluate your committee's performance.

- Is there a spirit of trust and confidence?
- Is this a teamwork effort, with each member sincerely trying to understand the other's point of view?
- Do members listen with an open mind?
- What successful actions have arisen out of past meetings?
- What failures, and why were there failures?
- Are meeting agendas broad enough? Is it time to extend committee activities and redefine the goals?

- Does management seek the assistance of the committee?
- Are employees making a full contribution?

### **Role of the chairman**

Frequently, both parties of the committee elect their own chairman, who will serve on an alternate basis. It is important that each chairman be respected and trusted by all committee members.

His is the task of establishing and maintaining good communication during committee meetings. He is skilled in the techniques of handling a meeting, and has a good knowledge of items on the agenda so that he can ensure full discussion on all points.

One way of keeping channels of communication open is by frequently consulting with members of his committee and soliciting their ideas, and by talking with other leaders who are not members of the committee. These regular, informal discussions by the chairman not only keep him in touch with what is happening and what people are thinking but help him to develop discussion points for meetings and to pinpoint complex situations where a subcommittee might be appointed.

From time to time, he might seek the specialized advice of other representatives of both parties who are not necessarily committee members, people who can make a special contribution to the program, bringing new ideas to the meeting table and who might, in time, become members of the committee.

New members may at first find difficulty in fitting in with the committee; it is the chairman's responsibility to brief them on what has gone before, that is, to supply the continuity.

#### *Before the meeting*

A few days before the meeting, the chairman and the secretary ensure that both parties have prepared agendas. Priorities are agreed on.

Since the purpose of the meeting is informed, open discussion, as much business as possible should be prepared in report form to be distributed well ahead of the meeting.

### *During the meeting*

During the meeting, the chairman keeps the discussion free-wheeling but to the point.

### *After the meeting*

The chairman ensures prompt follow-through on decisions made at the meeting. Some matters will require action to be taken by those who are not members of the committee and it is the responsibility of the chairman, speaking for the committee, to contact those who have the authority to consider, or implement, committee decisions.

### *The right man*

The chairman must, above all, have the confidence of all committee members. He is impartial and knowledgeable about the agenda items. He is forceful enough to keep discussion to the point while encouraging everyone to speak.

## **Role of the secretary**

The secretary co-ordinates the work of the committee and the chairman. He is responsible for correspondence and, in general, seeing that the nuts-and-bolts side of the operation runs smoothly and efficiently. But more than this, he is an advisor. The secretary has the skill and the zest for talking with people at all levels, for prompting ideas and helping with formal presentations to the committee.

He keeps in touch with new developments within the organization and advises when these should be brought up for discussion.

Since he is the communication link between the chairman and the representatives, he should not depend on the uncertain schedules of inter-office mail and the formality of the memo, but take the time to visit and talk with other members.

### *Before the meeting*

The secretary meets with the chairman to discuss and develop the agenda, which he distributes a few days before the meeting.

### *During the meeting*

He keeps notes, and as the meeting progresses frequently summarizes the discussion on key points so that members can correct

any misunderstandings. He assists the chairman in keeping discussion to the point.

### *After the meeting*

He prepares drafts of the minutes which he then submits for joint approval by the representatives. Within two or three days of the meeting, the corrected minutes should be distributed to the members, with copies posted where all employees can read them. He also conducts all correspondence related to the committee.

### *The right man*

The ideal secretary must, of course, have the skill to follow the action at the meeting while at the same time keeping comprehensive notes for the minutes. He is impartial and accurate and has a complete understanding of committee objectives. He has tact, for as secretary he may be called upon to smooth ruffled tempers. He is skillful in encouraging people to submit their ideas to the committee, and he has enough knowledge of the organization to act as advisor to the chairman.

## **Role of the union representative**

This representative is the communication link between the employee and the committee and his job is to keep the union members informed and involved in the work of the committee.

He is the voice of his fellow employees, his "constituents"—no easy matter for it sometimes means that he has to set aside his own opinions when they do not fit the consensus.

### *Before the meeting*

The representative is constantly in touch with his constituents and knows what problems affect them and on what matters they want action taken. He will bring these matters to the attention of the secretary who will include them on the agenda. If the matter is urgent, he may recommend the secretary to call a special meeting.

When the agenda is distributed, the "rep" will discuss items with his constituents, or at least with the spokesmen and obtain a consensus. He must, of course, obtain the views of as many people as possible, not just those who have a ready opinion on everything or only those whose opinions coincide with his own.

### *During the meeting*

The representative will put forth the views of his constituents and seek information on items of interest to them.

### *After the meeting*

The representative, when he receives the minutes of the meeting, will discuss them with the employees, explaining the action taken and the reasoning behind the action.

Often there is a gap in the downward flow of information, even when there is broad distribution of the minutes. Minutes, after all, are only terse, condensed reports—it's up to the representative to supply the reality behind the printed word, the "why" and the "how" of the meeting.

### *The right man*

The ideal representative must be able to research and discuss problems objectively. He must have a good knowledge of the operation of the unit he represents and of the organization as a whole. He must have the respect and trust of the people of his unit and should have a viable relationship with other sections of the organization to win their confidence and co-operation. He has the ability to fully express his constituents' points of view and is a concise "reporter".

## **Role of the Employer Representative**

As with the union representative, the management appointee is the communication link between the committee and the top policy-makers.

In this respect, the management representative must be fully acquainted with the overall operations and plans of the undertaking, and be in a position to report back directly to policy-making management the views, plans and opinions of the committee.

In the communication role, therefore, the management representative is the link between committee recommendation and management action.

### *Before the meeting*

The representative meets with management colleagues to discuss their problems, ideas and plans with which he may acquaint

the committee. He will also discuss the agenda with them to obtain their specific views on upcoming matters.

### *During the meeting*

The representative will put forth management's position on all items. He will sense the tenor of discussions so that he can accurately report to his colleagues the consensus of the committee on the various matters debated. He is able to give authoritative replies to questions about management's views and thinking.

### *After the meeting*

He will have discussions with management colleagues on committee deliberations and recommendations. At this stage he may also need to obtain answers to queries raised by the union representatives.

### *The right man*

As with any committee member, a prime requirement is the ability to communicate fully and effectively. The management representative is, naturally, the management spokesman and in this capacity he will need to be fully informed about management in general and their plans and objectives in particular. He will need to pass on to the committee information on such mutual-interest matters as impending change, and its possible effects on manpower, for example. His position on the committee calls for a deep understanding of labour relations, and the ability to listen to—and perhaps interpret—what is said before, during and after the meeting. He is a respected and informed member of the management team who enjoys a well-founded relationship with both the union representatives and his management colleagues.

## **Role of the Canada Department of Labour**

The Canada Department of Labour has one overall objective: to achieve economic and social progress, with justice, through the promotion of good industrial relations and improved working standards and benefits.

An important ingredient of good industrial relations is joint consultation, which means better communication. With both labour and management being well-informed about each other's

problems, and goals, the result can only be improved efficiency, through greater understanding.

Now, more than ever before, there is an urgent need for labour-management co-operation. The world is changing so fast that, according to industrial relations specialists, it will soon be necessary to retrain workers every five years—and that includes workers at all levels. What long-range plans are being made for retraining? What sort of retraining programs does the employee see as vital and what sort will management be needing in two years, in five years?

Modern mass media keep today's worker well informed on the broad social and economic factors that influence his life but how well informed is he on the social and economic factors that govern the place where he works? How well does he know the company—how well does it know him? It has been the experience of the Department that LMC committees can become a kind of central clearing house where information is received and distributed quickly and efficiently.

To meet rapid changes in industrial technology, to meet growing competition in domestic and world markets, to meet the increasing demand for trained and skilled people—these are the challenges that the modern business and industrial world faces. They are challenges best met by the union-management approach of joint consultation committees.

It is the job of the Labour-Management Consultation Branch to provide the technical knowledge and advice to help organizations form their own committees, and to provide continuing assistance when a committee requests it.

The branch, in a booklet entitled "Today's Increasing Need for Joint Consultation" states its position: "Today, the Canada Department of Labour, through its LMC Branch, is promoting a program with the aim of suggesting new policy approaches, such as stressing positive goals or objectives of labour-management co-operation and broader consultation on matters having to do with technological change, displacement of workers, training and any other method necessary to ease the impacts of industrial change."

“The results of such preliminary consultation may be the subject of collective bargaining when the time comes to write into formal agreements those understandings reached in informal discussion.”







